

New York State Department of Health

Alert:

High Wind and Lakeshore Flood Watches are Issued for Sunday, February 24, 2019

Guidance for Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Homecare Agencies, EMS Agencies, Hospice, Diagnostic and Treatment Centers, and Adult Care Facilities

Situation: A High Wind Watch is issued for between about 10 AM Sunday through about 10 AM Monday morning, for the following areas:

the Niagara Frontier, the Rochester Area, Jefferson County, the Western Southern Tier, the Northern Finger Lakes, Oswego and Lewis Counties.

Wind gusts are expected to be much stronger than recent high wind events and may gust as high as 75 miles per hour in some areas. These winds have the potential for significant to severe impacts, including widespread damage to trees, powerlines, and property and may make high profile, vehicle travel extremely difficult to nearly impossible.

A Lakeshore Flood Watch is also issued for Sunday morning through Sunday night for areas along the Lake Erie shoreline and Niagara River.

Flooding impacts also have the potential to be significant and may include strong onshore winds and ice intrusion into bays and over the Niagara River ice boom.

Who to Contact for Assistance: Providers needing assistance as a result of these serious weather conditions should immediately contact their local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) / Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as well as their NYSDOH Regional Office.

To contact your NYSDOH Regional Office staff during the weekend or after hours on business days, call the NYSDOH 24/7 Duty Officer at: 866.881.2809. Following these weekend events, during normal business hours you should contact your NYSDOH program staff directly at the Regional Office.

Important Precautions: Please review, and be prepared to take, the following precautions in advance of this event to help ensure the well-being and safety of their patients and residents:

- Make sure that contact information for your Office of Emergency Management, and NYSDOH are readily available to staff leading into this weekend. Providers should review their Emergency Response and Evacuation Plans with staff in advance of Sunday, to ensure all are aware of proper procedures

- ESRDs should contact their patients and arrange for early dialysis for those patients whose treatments may be impacted by the immediate travel or other impacts of the storm and should be ready to communicate with the New York State ESRD Network for its assistance.
- Similarly, hospice, homecare agencies/LHCSAs should contact their Level 1 patients, other potentially vulnerable patients, and their families and consider moving up any visits for those whose normal visits might be impacted by limited travel and limited access by staff. Patients should be contacted immediately following the storm to perform checks on their safety and condition of their health.
- Facilities in flood prone areas should review their emergency plans for relocating patients to higher floors when shelter in place is determined to be safe, all evacuation procedures should be reviewed with leadership and staff.
- All providers should check critical supplies and contact vendors in advance of the weekend to ensure and should consider stocking additional supplies to ensure coverage for at least 72 - 96 hours going into Sunday morning. Consider additional blankets and other methods for warming should power be lost temporarily.
- Inpatient and residential facilities should test their emergency generators as soon as possible to ensure that they are operating properly and should immediately call for service if needed; ensure that they have enough fuel to maintain generator functioning for at least 72 – 96 hours going into Sunday morning. Plans for adjusting staff shifts and management of staffing shortages due to transportation impacts should be reviewed.
- Facilities in flood prone areas should review their emergency plans for relocating patients to higher floors when shelter in place is determined to be safe.
- Inpatient and residential facilities should review their emergency procedures plans and evacuation plans with staff and hospitals, nursing homes and adult care facilities should additionally ensure that their eFINDS equipment is readily available and staff trained in use of eFINDS prepared in case there is a need for them to evacuate. Review vendor transportation arrangements.
- Local County EMS Directors and local agencies, REMSCO should alert staff to potential surge and prepare for potential need for their crews to assist in areas hardest hit with severe injuries or facility evacuations. EMS should also watch for wind advisories and bridge usage in case bans on vans/ trucks etc. are issued.
- Ensure alternate methods/devices for communications are ready, charged and available.